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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1356

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: EIGHT MAR DEL PLATA LAWYERS ABDUCTED, ONE DEAD

SUMMARY: ELEVEN PERSONS--EIGHT LAWYERS AND THREE OF THEIR WIVES--HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED BY HEAVILY ARMED, UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS IN MAR DEL PLATA IN THE PAST WEEK. THREE OF THEM WERE SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED BUT HAVE PROVIDED NO INFORMATION ON THEIR ABDUCTIONS TO DATE. ONE OF THE ABDUCTED LAWYERS WAS FOUND DEAD ON A ROAD NEAR MAR DEL PLATA. END SUMMARY.

1. FOUR LAWYERS WERE ABDUCTED IN MAR DEL PLATA ON JULY 6. CARMELO RICCI, A PROMINENT CIVIL LAWYER, WAS RELEASED TWO DAYS LATER. THE BODY OF ANOTHER, NORBERTO OSCAR CENTENO, WAS FOUND ON A ROADSIDE SOUTH OF MAR DEL PLATA ON JULY 11. IT WAS CENTENO, A WELL KNOWN LABOR AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAWYER, WHO HAD DRAWN UP THE LABOR LAW CONTRACT DURING THE LAST PERONIST GOVERNMENT AND HAD BEEN LEGAL ADVISOR FOR A NUMBER OF LOCAL UNIONS. THE OTHER TWO STILL DISAPPEARED LAWYERS ARE RAUL HUGO ALAIS, AN ASSISTANT IN RICCI'S LAW OFFICE, AND SALVADOR MANUEL ARESTIN, A GRADUATE OF THE LOCAL LAW SCHOOL. LAW PARTNERS CARLOS BOZZI AND TOMAS FRESNEDA AND FRESNEDA'S PREGNANT WIFE WERE ABDUCTED FROM THEIR LAW OFFICE IN MAR DEL PLATA ON JULY 8. YESTERDAY (JULY 13) LAWYER JOSE VERDE, FORMER SECRETARY OF THE LOCAL JUVENILE COURT, AND HIS WIFE WERE

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ABDUCTED BUT LATER RELEASED.. ANOTHER COUPLE, ENRIQUE GARCIA AND HIS WIFE MARIA ESTER VAZQUEZ, EMPLOYEES IN A LEGAL SERVICES OFFICE, WERE ALSO ABDUCTED EARLY JULY 13.

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2. THE PRESIDENTS OF BOTH THE ARGENTINE FEDERATION OF BAR ASSOCIATIONS AND THE BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE BAR ASSOCIATION HAVE CONSULTED WITH AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL MILITARY OFFICIALS IN MAR DEL PLATA ON THE WAVE OF ABDUCTIONS AND HAVE REQUESTED AN AUDIENCE WITH INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY. ON JULY 11, LOCAL MILITARY AUTHORITIES REPORTEDLY VISITED LOCAL BAR ASSOCIATION HEADQUARTERS TO GATHER INFORMATION ON THE DISAPPEARANCES AND TO CONVEY THE CONCERN OF THE ARMED FORCES. HABEAS CORPUS WRITS HAVE BEEN FILED FOR THE DISAPPEARED PERSONS.

3. COMMENT: SOME OBSERVERS SPECULATE THAT THE LAWYERS' ABDUCTIONS WERE AUTHORIZED BY FIRST CORPS COMMANDER SUAREZ MASON OR BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE GOVERNOR IBERICO SAINT JEAN IN A MOVE TO EMBARRASS THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT. EMBASSY IS SEEKING FURTHER INFORMATION.
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